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SUBJECT: Visit to Waziristan IDP Relief Center

11. (U) Summary. Following reports of rioting at multiple relief distribution points in Dera Ismail (D.I.) Khan, representatives of USAID, the U.N., a local relief organization, and the media traveled with Lt. General Nadeem Ahmed on October 28 to the newly established centralized relief distribution center at Ratha Kulachi Stadium in D.I. Khan District. While the reorganization of distribution resulted in significant beneficiary backlogs and transportation issues, General Nadeem's interventions have already led to improved delivery of humanitarian assistance to displaced families in D.I. Khan. End summary.

Background

12. (U) As of November 3, local non-governmental organization (NGO) FIDA, a U.S. Government-funded implementing partner, had registered approximately 319,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from South Waziristan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). To date, only 162,800 people have been verified by the Government of Pakistan's (GoP) National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA); however, the IDP verification process is ongoing. Local authorities estimate that initial registration lists may contain more than 20 percent ineligible or duplicate entries. Therefore, the GoP Special Support Group (SSG) expects verification to yield an estimated 250,000 eligible IDPs, more than 80 percent of which reside with host families in D.I. Khan District.

13. (U) On October 24 and 25, local media in Pakistan reported that IDPs from South Waziristan rioted at several relief distribution points in D.I. Khan District in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) due to confusion over, or non-receipt of, U.N. World Food Program (WFP) food rations.

14. (U) According to the U.N., recent IDP unrest at distribution points resulted from misunderstanding the relief distribution process and site locations. Until mid-October, South Waziristan IDPs registered at one of five locations in D.I. Khan District, where FIDA immediately provided families a non-food item (NFI) kit. Following initial registration and receipt of NFIs, IDPs were required to travel to a separate location for U.N. World Food Program (WFP) rations. According to the U.N., IDPs at several registration points became disruptive in late October after suspecting that they were shorted the monthly food ration.

Field Visit to D.I. Khan Distribution Center

¶15. (U) To follow up on reported IDP rioting, the Ambassador requested that a representative from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) travel to D.I. Khan District. On October 28, Lt. General Nadeem Ahmed, head of the SSG, escorted the USAID/OFDA Principle Regional Advisor for South Asia, the newly arrived Country Representative of the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, and CNN to Ratha Kaluchi Stadium - the new central relief distribution center for IDPs from in D.I. Khan.

¶16. (U) During the visit, General Nadeem explained that the SSG addressed IDP concerns by co-locating food and NFI distribution. However, he clarified that IDPs must continue to pass through one of five initial registration points, noting that FIDA registration forms authorize NFI/food collection at the stadium.

¶17. (U) At the stadium, FIDA distributes UNHCR NFI kits, which include sleeping mats, blankets, buckets, and soap. Local NGO PEACE distributes the WFP family food ration, which includes wheat flour, oil, sugar, salt, tea, and USAID-branded pulses and high-energy biscuits. During the visit, the GoP had also begun distribution of 10,000 Frontier Corps-provided tents.

Verification and GoP-Provided Cash Cards

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¶18. (U) Following collection of relief items at Kulachi Stadium, families present the registration form and national identification cards to FIDA, who forwards this information to the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) for review. One week later, the registration information is sent to NADRA for verification and determination of eligibility for the GoP-issued electronic cash cards and subsequent monthly stipend of 5,000 Pakistani Rupees (PKR), or approximately USD 60. Note: See paragraph 27.

¶19. (U) The SSG suspects that a portion of the individuals registering with FIDA may be part of normal seasonal migration from Waziristan to D.I. Khan District. These individuals will be disqualified through the NADRA verification process and will not receive the GoP-provided cash card.

¶110. (U) The SSG believes that cash cards will mitigate access and distribution issues in D.I. Khan, and support local markets. Beginning in November, General Nadeem indicated that families holding cash cards will receive monthly payments of 5,000 PKR, approximately USD 60, in place of the monthly WFP food rations valued at 3,500 PKR, approximately USD 43. Card distribution has already begun with the old caseload of Waziristan IDPs - the 80,500 individuals displaced from South Waziristan before September. As of November 3, the GoP had issued 7,518 family cash cards, of which 6,491 had been activated. Note: approximately 33 percent of current NADRA-verified families have received cash cards to date.

¶111. (SBU) The SSG indicated that cash card distribution may be complicated by inability to use point-of-sale (PoS) machines at the stadium to allow IDPs to immediately withdraw the 5,000 PKR in cash. The SSG previously used a wireless PoS system in D.I. Khan; however, General Nadeem indicated that the wireless network is not currently functional due to the ongoing conflict in Waziristan. To reconnect the machines, the SSG is working to establish landline telephone service at the stadium.

Registration and Distribution Backlog

¶112. (U) During the stadium visit, the SSG, FIDA, PEACE, and the GoP military held a troubleshooting meeting to discuss recurrent

registration and distribution problems. The SSG reported that lack of registration forms delayed registration in mid-October. To address the issue, SSG/FIDA contracted a local printing company to produce the form.

¶13. (U) The USAID/OFDA Principle Regional Advisor found that, although the center was well organized and addressed IDP discontent, the new system created a significant bottleneck during the first week of implementation, resulting in long lines of 7,000 to 8,000 people outside the stadium. On October 28, the majority of IDPs waited to pass through two security checkpoints and had not yet entered the stadium. However, the SSG provided water and shade points intermittently along lines. Note: See paragraph 26.

¶14. (U) On October 28, local officials estimated that the one-window system currently accommodates between 1,000 and 1,500 families per day. However, General Nadeem believes that the stadium has the capacity to process closer to 3,000 families per day. He noted that the reorganization of distribution had created a beneficiary backlog, which would be cleared in 10 to 12 days - on or before November 8.

Checkpoints, IDP Transport, and Monitoring

¶15. (U) General Nadeem explained that the military had established exit routes and checkpoints from South Waziristan - located at Gurdawai, near Tank District; Khajuri, near Bannu District; and Toi Khula (recently added), near Zhob District, Baluchistan Province.

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¶16. (U) Beginning the week of October 26, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) began providing transportation assistance, funded in part by UNHCR, for IDP transport from military checkpoints in South Waziristan to FIDA registration points in D.I. Khan District. (Displaced families have complained that available transport from conflict areas to D.I. Khan has been cost prohibitive for some.)

¶17. (SBU) UNHCR has engaged FIDA to provide immediate assistance to IDPs at military checkpoints. In addition, UNHCR is in the process of training approximately ten national NGO staff in protection monitoring (to facilitate identification of vulnerable individuals).

While it remains impossible to determine the extent to which some people may be trapped by insecurity inside Waziristan, UNHCR plans to post at least one trained monitor at each of the three identified exit points, not only to identify the needs of those exiting, but also to ascertain humanitarian conditions within Waziristan.

Schools for IDPs

¶18. (U) According to the SSG, nine schools in D.I. Khan District have been identified as schools that will receive Waziristan IDP students. Each of the schools has agreed to a split schedule, with students and teachers from D.I. Khan using the school during the morning and IDP students and teachers from Waziristan using the school in the afternoon.

Tank District

¶19. (U) According to the SSG, less than 20 percent of Waziristan IDPs relocated to Tank District. In Tank, the SSG has opted to maintain separate registration and distribution systems, due to limited local capacity to provide services simultaneously. Therefore, FIDA will conduct registration first, followed by distribution of relief and food items.

Concerns

¶20. (SBU) The SSG and GoP military indicated that efforts to include tribal elders in the distribution process have yielded both positive and negative results. The USAID/OFDA PRA noted that, during the October 28 visit, Mehsud tribal elders objected to IDP women collecting relief items, demanding that women send a male family member to collect relief items on their behalf. In a November 3 telephone conversation with USAID/OFDA, the SSG reported that women continue to collect relief items at the stadium, despite tribal elder objections. Note: See paragraph 26.

¶21. (U) At a November 4 donor coordination meeting, U.N. agencies expressed concern that the one-window distribution system solved as well as created problems. The majority of IDPs in D.I. Khan are concentrated in six rural tehsils (district sub-divisions), thus face challenges due to the cost and time required to travel to/from the stadium.

¶22. (U) In addition, following receipt of the NFI kit and food ration, IDPs must find a way to transport heavy and bulky supplies from the stadium to host family locations. According to the SSG, families often pool money together to collectively provide the 200 to 300 PRK needed to rent transportation.

¶23. (U) General Nadeem indicated that the earliest IDP families would return to South Waziristan is March, 2010, due to the onset of winter. Therefore, the majority of IDP families will remain with host families for more than five months - nearly double the time IDPs from Malakand Division spent in host communities. However, General Nadeem indicated that the hosting arrangements are distinct

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in D.I. Khan. Many Waziristan IDPs had second homes in the area, allowing them to move into the vacant houses, while also hosting friends and relatives from Waziristan. Note: See paragraph 29.

Additional UNHCR Take-Aways from D.I. Khan Visit

¶24. (SBU) Newly arrived UNHCR Country Representative Kebede told Refcoord that while he was unable genuinely to assess the situation on the ground in D.I. Khan due to the managed nature of the visit, military and CNN presence, the newly established procedures, and the necessary security restrictions preventing movement outside the stadium, he was pleased with the agreements he was able to reach with Lt. General Nadeem. The GoP will permit national NGO and U.N. staff to travel into D.I. Khan for assistance implementation and to undertake the proposed UN multi-cluster assessment. UNHCR will also facilitate a shelter program, including winterized tents (heretofore non-existent). UNHCR plans to provide 30,000 tents for general distribution by a local NGO.

¶25. (SBU) UNHCR will continue to expedite NFI kit distribution by sending the supplies directly from the primary U.N. warehouse in Nowshera to D.I. Khan warehouse for distribution, while using the U.N. logistics base in Bhakkar, Punjab Province, only as a back-up. The D.I. Khan warehouse has an 8,000 NFI kit capacity, and Bhakkar has a 3,000 kit capacity.

Resolution of Outstanding Issues

¶26. (U) To resolve the issue of long lines at the stadium, the SSG has assigned Mehsud sub-tribes with alternating relief collection days. In addition, the SSG plans to designate days for women, allowing female heads of household to collect relief items as needed.

¶27. (U) The verification process traditionally takes three weeks; however, the SSG is working with MSW and NADRA to reduce processing time. The SSG has asked that NADRA provide FIDA the appropriate database format to allow direct transfer of IDP information after MSW review. General Nadeem believes this will hasten the process by approximately one week.

¶28. (U) USAID/OFDA has followed up with General Nadeem regarding the issuance of additional non-objection certificates (NOCs) for NGOs with the experience and capacity necessary to operate in D.I. Khan and Tank Districts. The SSG indicated that only three organizations - all local NGOs - currently have NOCs, although provincial government officials are reporting four, including two international NGOs. General Nadeem plans to further discuss the issue and possibilities with the SSG and GoP military. However, he anticipates that many of the distribution issues will be resolved through the cash card system.

¶29. (U) Due to the anticipated five-month host family arrangements in D.I. Khan, USAID/OFDA will assess the need to provide host family or rental subsidies for IDP families to mitigate potential host family fatigue during the winter months.

¶30. (SBU) While the October 28 distribution initiated a new procedure and was managed for media and security purposes, it is clear that the presence and initiative of General Nadeem has a significant positive impact in achieving resolution of relief operations issues on the ground. General Nadeem indicated to USAID/OFDA rep that he is planning to conduct regular site visits to D.I. Khan, including a visit the week of November 1, to further monitor the progress of distribution and registration at Ratha Kulachi Stadium.

Patterson